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ABSTRACT

Using ethnographic techniques to observe seven fifth grade and seven third grade students, a study examined the function of children's oral language during creative writing sessions in typical classroom situations. Findings indicated that oral language plays an important role in the writing process; specifically, that it (1) accompanies writing as an intrapersonal function, (2) helps writers think about and revise their text, (3) helps writers make decisions about what to write, (4) is highly related to writing and almost entirely on-task, (5) provides opportunities for collaboration to enhance learning opportunities, and (6) helps students talk about and increase their understanding of the writing process. Results suggested that writing in the elementary classroom is a dynamic and whole language cognitive process in which reading, listening, and speaking contribute to students' writing. Analyses revealed that oral language provides students with opportunities to test ideas and sound out the appropriateness of particular words or phrases. The Manual Observation Form--MOF--used for data collection is described and a particular transcript of an MOF is discussed in detail. Data are analyzed according to both Kasten and Halliday codes. Reading aloud and subvocalization are addressed as special issues.) (JD)

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A STUDY OF 3RD AND 5TH GRADE STUDENTS' ORAL LANGUAGE DURING THE WRITING PROCESS IN ELEMENTARY CLASSROOMS

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A STUDY OF 3RD AND 5TH GRADE STUDENTS' ORAL LANGUAGE DURING THE WRITING PROCESS IN ELEMENTARY CLASSROOMS

Background and Methodology

The purpose of this study was to examine the function of children's oral language during creative writing sessions in typical classroom settings. This current study was an outgrowth of previous work done by Dr. Wendy C. Kasten while at the University of Arizona. We were seeking to replicate one aspect of the research in which she participated with Dr. Yetta Goodman, under the auspices of the National Institute of Education. Their two year longitudinal study involved the analyses of various aspects of children's writing. The purposes of our continuing study were to focus on the oral language data collected, and to collect more longitudinal data on students whose backgrounds were different than those of the subjects in the original Arizona study.

Our research was begun in the spring of 1985 and involved ethnographic style observations of 7 students from one fifth grade classroom. During this first semester of data collection, a graduate student and a mature undergraduate student assisted the researchers in conducting forty-six observations. During the second semester of data collection, fall of 1985, one graduate student and two researchers collected data in twenty-one writing

episodes with six 5th graders and thirty-six writing episodes with seven 3rd graders.

Subjects were selected on the basis of teacher recommendations. Teachers were asked to include above-average, average, and below-average writers in their recommendations. Both free writing (journal writing) and structured writing assignments were observed. No attempt was made to influence the types of writing instruction or assignments which were occurring in the classrooms.

As stated, the procedure for data collection was an ethnographic style technique. A researcher sat close to each subject in such a way as to be able to see the subject's writing taking place and see the subject's face. During this one-to-one observation, the researcher copied verbatim the student's written text onto the manual observation form. Included in the notetaking by the researcher were all behaviors and language exchanges which took place involving the subject. Each observation lasted for the entire writing episode until the child completed the draft. Writing episodes ranged from 20 - 45 minutes in length, with the average writing period approximately half an hour. Probably one of the most difficult aspects of this research was to be a non-participant in the classroom milieu. Only if asked did the researchers say anything to the children during writing, even if misbehaviors were occurring involving either the subjects or

others nearby. The researchers were not there to influence what happened during writing, merely to observe what was happening. Usually a researcher would only interrupt in one of two situations: (a) Either to answer a specific question asked by a subject (and occasionally one of their neighbors, though an attempt was made to avoid this) or (b) ask the subject to read something to the researcher. This request for a reading would probably occur if the researcher couldn't read the writing, or to show interest at the conclusion of the writing episode by allowing the child to share his writing orally with the researcher.

Data Collection Form

Donald Graves in his original research on children's writing developed a manual observation form; Yetta Goodman revised it for the Arizona study; and Kasten revised it even further for this research. Our manual observation form (MOF), shown in Figure 1, has a space for subject text in which is recorded the subject's writing, exactly as he puts it on his paper - invented spellings and all; a column in which to list the number of each observed subject behavior; another column for the category code; and a space for an explanation of the observed behaviors, such as what the subject was saying or a comment on what the subject was doing, called observer text.

In the upper right hand section of the form, information is recorded for each session including researcher, context of writing

(such as whether it was journal writing or structured assignment), the first name only of the subject, the date, pages, grade, teacher, and the beginning and ending times of the observation. As can be observed on the MOF, the codes enable the researcher to quickly record the behaviors and, when further elaboration is needed, the space for observer text allows for this elaboration.

CODES DR = DRAWING
I = INTERRUPTION
R = RESOURCE USE (EXPLAIN KIND)
RR = REREADING, SILENT OR ORAL
T = TALK
RV = RIVISION (CHANGE IN TEXT)
CRV = COSMETIC REVISION (HANDWRITING)
SRV = SPELLING REVISION (CHANGING ORDER OF LETTERS IN WORDS)
ST = STOP AND THINK
SV = SUBVOCALIZE

RESEARCHER _____
CONTEXT OF WRITING _____
SUBJECT _____
DATE _____ PAGE _____ OF _____
GRADE ____ TEACHER _____
STARTING TIME _____
ENDING TIME _____

(rev. 1.30.85)

SUBJECT TEXT	NUMBER	CODE	OBSERVER TEXT

Figure 1 Manual Observation Form

The codes on the MOF stand for the following:

DR - Drawing. Some children draw small pictures on their papers as they write, almost as if the drawings help

them visualize what they are writing. Others doodle on their papers as if the routine of "mindless drawing" helps them concentrate on or think about what they are writing.

I - Interruption. Any interruption of the child's writing is coded in this way. The interruption could be something as insignificant as dropping a pencil and picking it up, to a fire drill happening during the writing time.

R - Resource. Children often use resources to aid them in their writing, especially with spellings. However, in addition to dictionaries, thesauruses, and formal aids to spelling or word discovery, children also consult posters, trade books, or classroom environmental print. They even use other people as resources.

RR - Reread. Most writers read over what they have already written in order to review their emerging text. Children do this, both orally and silently.

T - Talk. Talk to either the observer or to a neighbor can be both off-task and on-task behavior. It can be initiated by the child or in answer to someone else's question or behest. In addition, children can be observed talking to no particular audience.

RV - Revision. When the child changes text, either by erasing, crossing out, or adding text, it is noted.

CRV - Cosmetic Revisions. A sub-category of revision is used when the child revises to improve the looks of handwriting.

SRV - Spelling Revision. This revision sub-category code is used when the subject changes the way a word is spelled, but not the word itself.

ST - Stop and Think. Often the subject will stop and think, perhaps stare into space, doodle on his/her paper, or in some way allow time to think about the writing. We cannot, of course, be sure the children are thinking about their writing, but one can often almost see the ideas churning around in their heads and the glimmer of "aha" when they resolve whatever dilemma they might have had.

SV - Subvocalizations. This code was used when any subvocalizations were made by the child. One can observe the child's lips moving and sometimes even hear what is said in whispered tones.

At the end of every day of data collection, a report was prepared by one of the researchers on site for each classroom in which observations were conducted. This "de-briefing" report summarized the day's activities in the classrooms during the time

observations were made to note special events, incidents, assignments, or classroom climates, that might provide additional understanding for the context of writing during later data analysis.

Transcript of Manual Observation Form

An interesting subject from the first year of the study was a learning disabled 5th grader, named Sam. One of Sam's stories, "A Night in the Forest," is being presented because it illustrates the importance of the child's talk during his writing. A casual observer might have simply thought Sam was "off-task" because he was talking while writing. However, one can see that his talking was directly related to what he was writing and, more importantly, was instrumental in helping him gather information for his writing. A transcript of this writing episode is presented to assist the reader in understanding all that occurred. This example demonstrates the scope of the function of language in children's writing and serves as a model which will be referred to throughout this report.

The following transcript of the MOF describes in detail all that Sam did and said during his writing episode, particularly his use of someone (the observer) and something (the pearls worn by the observer) as resources to facilitate the development of his plot. The context of Sam's writing is free writing in his journal. The students in this class write daily in their

journals, anything they choose. Most of them write stories or poems rather than personal observations. Sam's text appears in capital letter, which is accompanied by explanations of all observable behavior. The codes from the manual observation form, described earlier, appear in parentheses to cue the reader as to how the behaviors were coded, in order to recreate the original writing episode in detail.

Before Sam begins to write he talks to the observer about what he is going to write today. He has been camping with his dad. Maybe he will write a story about camping.

"THE NIGHT IN THE FOREST"

ONE NIGHT MY DAD AND I WENT TO THE FOREST PARK. (ST) Sam stops and stares off in space, thinking.

WE MADE A TENT AND MADE FIRE FOR... (SRV) Sam corrects the spelling of "fore."

...DINNER. I WENT FISHING AND CAUGHT A FISH. AND THEN I CAUGHT A CLAM.... (T) Sam asked the observer about clams: "Do you <u>catch</u> them?"

I OPENED IT AND FOUND A PEARL. I FISHED FOR ANOTHER HOUR.... (T) Sam asked the observer about the pearls she had on, where she got them, how much they cost.

BY THAT TIME I HAD 26 CLAMS. (RR, T) Sam reread orally to the observer what he had so far.

ME AND MY DAD OPENED ALL OF THEM. (DR, ST) At this point Sam

began to doodle on a piece of scrap paper, just concentrating on the circles he was making, and staring. (T) Then Sam asked the observer about how many pearls were in the necklace and, when told she didn't know, he did some guessing as to how many there might be.

23 OF THEM HAD PEARLS IN THEM. (SRV) He revised the spelling of "them."

EACH (CRV) ONE WAS OVER 1 THOUSAND (CRV) DOLLARS. WE CAUGHT MORE FISH, AND HAD DINNER. (RR) At this point Sam reread his story silently.

WE WERE EXAMINING... (T, R) Sam asked the observer if "examining" were spelled correctly.

...THEM WITH A...(T,R) asked observer how to spell "microscope."

...MICROSCOPE, AND FOUND THAT THEY WERE REAL. WE SLEPT ALL NIGHT. THE...(RV) Sam went back and put a period after "night."

NEXT DAY WE WOKE UP FROM A NOISE. I LOOKED OUT THE TENT AND SAW A LEOPARD. (T, R) During the writing of "leopard," Sam asked the observer, "Do you spell leopard l-e-o-p-a-r-d?"

WE WERE AWAKE FINALLY. (T, R) Sam asked if the spelling of "finally" were correct.

THE LEOPARD SAW ME AND STARTED RUNNING TOWARD THE TENT. MY DAD GRABBED A PIECE...(SV) Sam was beginning to subvocalize

constantly now, as he was writing - almost as if he was "listening" to the story as he was writing it.

...OF STAKE IN THE WATER. HE RAN AFTER IT. WE BRANG (CRV) THE TENT DOWN, PUT EVERYTHING IN THE CAR AND DROVE OFF. I TOLD HIM TO STOP. I RAN BACK AND GOT THE PEARLS. (CRV) WHEN I DIDN'T COME BACK MY DAD... (ST) Sam stared into space.

...CAME AFTER ME. HE HAD SEEN...(CRV)...ME PETTING THE LEOPARD. (T, RR) Sam reread part of the story to the observer.

HE GRABBED A GUN. (T) Sam told his neighbor he was writing a scary story.

I TOLD HIM IT WAS OK. (T, R) Sam read the last line to the observer.

WE TOOK HIM HOME AND HAD HIM FOR A PET. SOON IT HAD BABIES. WE KEPT THEM (CRV). SOON THEY GREW UP. (ST) Sam stopped and thought for a few seconds.

WE HAD ALOT (CRV) OF ANIMALS IN OUR HOUSE. THEY HAD BABIES TO BUT WE LET THE ANIMALS...(SRV) Sam corrected the spelling of animals.

...GO BUT STILL HAD OUR BABY. AND THAT WAS OUR PET. (T) Sam, to the observer: "Are your hands tired? Mine aren't. How many sheets did that take?" Sam wanted to know how many sheets of the MOF the observer had utilized during his writing of the story.

In this writing episode Sam utilized the observer as a resource. The pearls the observer was wearing served as a stimulus for an idea in his story line and, through questioning, Sam tried to get details to include in his story. Children typically use each other as resources, the way Sam was using the observer.

Analysis of the Data

This section of the report describes how the analysis of each writing episode, like the one described in Sam's story, proceeded. All the MOFs used to collect the detailed data on each writing episode for each student's story were carefully reviewed to identify all examples of oral language. For each story, the utterances were then listed on a separate form designed for this use. These recorded utterances and the accompanying information regarding each constitute the data base for this study.

Each incidence of language was examined and was judged first according to codes developed by Kasten for the previous study. The same utterances were then reviewed according to the functions of oral language developed by sociolinguist M. A. K. Halliday. Both coding systems are described in this section. All forms were double checked by a different researcher to insure that two or more researchers agreed on the judgments. The results of the coding were tallied and analyzed for possible patterns.

Appropriate tables were constructed to summarize principal findings.

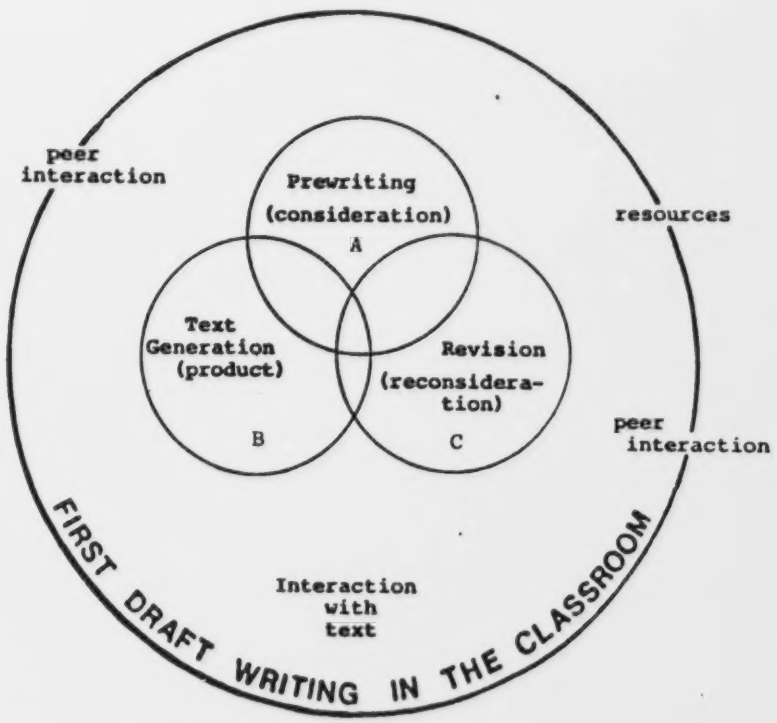
Kasten Codes

The basis for the Kasten codes is a model of the writing process, similar to models seen in much recent literature (Britton, 1975; Flowers and Hayes, 1981; Gebhardt, 1981; Guthrie, 1981; Murray, 1982; Petrosky and Brozick, 1979). All these proposed models describe writing in three basic dynamic phases, although the terminology may vary somewhat. The first phase is pre-writing or consideration. This is the planning, inventing, or perceiving stage of writing, without which the writer is unprepared to commit thoughts to written language. The second phase, the actual writing of the text, can be called text production, generating, or translating. The third stage is generally referred to as revision or reconsideration, in which the writer reviews the emerging text to change, evaluate, or confirm what has been completed.

Figure 2 is a model of this dynamic process, the phases of which can occur in any order or amount depending on the needs and the circumstances at hand. The writing terms which have been employed in Figure 2 are pre-writing or consideration, text production, and revision or reconsideration. The three circles are contained within a larger sphere representing the unique classroom milieu including peer interactions, interactions with

text, and the many kinds of available resources students use in the process of writing. This model refers to the first draft writing episodes observed in classrooms.

Figure 2 Model of the Writing Process



Kasten 1984

In the Kasten codes, utterances were assigned letters "A," "B," "C," "D," "E," or "F," depending on what relationship, if

any, the utterance had to the process of writing. The criteria for the letters are as follows:

A. Consideration/Pre-writing Comments. These comments assist the subject in planning and considering their text, such as pre-writing strategies. For example, a subject might ask how to spell a word s/he needs to write or discuss with a classmate what to name a character in his/her story.

B. Language During Text Production. There is language that accompanies actual text production. This type of language usually takes the form of subjects spelling softly to themselves as they write a word or softly sounding out parts of words as they write.

C. Reconsideration of Text Language. Subjects may re-think something they have written, rereading portions of text, asking for advice about whether or not to capitalize a word they have written, etc.

D. Other writing related comments. This type of language does not fall into categories "A," "B," or "C" but relates to the fact that writing is taking place. Comments like "This is hard," "Where is the pencil sharpener?" or "That's a good story" are just a few examples.

E. Language Unrelated to Writing. The subjects sometimes used language that was judged as unrelated to the fact

that writing was taking place. A subject might say "Bless you!" to a sneezing classmate, ask if it is time for lunch yet, or make a comment that is social in nature.

F. Undetermined Language. This category was added during the present study. Some comments made by subjects, which were partly or totally inaudible to the researcher, were still judged related to writing based on context, but could not be assigned to other codes.

These categories were used collectively to explore the overall relationship between the children's oral language and their engagements in writing. The particular function of the language, regardless of the writing taking place, was viewed via Halliday's functions of language.

Halliday Codes

Halliday's work, which has made significant contributions to the understanding of language usage, approaches language as a collection of overlapping functions which are practiced and mastered by children as the needs arise (Fox and Allen, 1983; Temple and Gillett, 1982). Each incidence of oral language was examined for as many functions of language as were appropriate to the utterance. The codes were assigned as follows:

1. Instrumental Model. "Hand me that pencil." Language is used to obtain something for the speaker.

2. Regulatory Model. "Stop that!" Language is used to control another's behavior but not for the direct benefit of the speaker.
3. Heuristic Model. "Want to hear my story?" Language is used to ask questions, find things out.
4. Interactional Model. "How are you doing?" Language is used to build "we-ness" between speaker and listener.
5. Personal Model. "I like your pearls. Pearls are my favorite jewelry." Language is used to communicate the speaker's feelings and point of view.
6. Imaginative Model. "It would be neat if we could all dress as elves."
7. Informational Model. "Matthew is my middle name." Language is used to convey information to others.

Reporting of the Data

The role of oral language in the writing process is an important one. All children involved in this study talked sometimes while they wrote, although some children talked more than others. There were also occasional writing episodes where no oral language was observed. Certain individual writers subvocalized extensively during writing, while others appeared to subvocalize very little.

Results of Kasten Coding

When the data were examined according to the Kasten coding system described earlier, children had observable oral language related to all parts of the writing process at different times (codes "A," "B," and "C"). For example, in Sam's writing episode, he talked with the observer about his camping topic, asked how many pearls were in her necklace, and asked someone how to spell the word "microscope." All these utterances were related to Sam's consideration of text, code "A" in the Kasten system, and resulted in his making decisions about what to write next. Sam was observed subvocalizing his text at times during this episode which represented category "B," interaction with the text during the mechanical process of writing. At different intervals, Sam asked questions to confirm or disconfirm something he had already written. He asked, "Do you CATCH clams?" Sam was reconsidering the appropriateness of his choice of the word "catch" in relation to clams. He asked if "examining" were spelled correctly after he wrote it on his paper, and confirmed the spelling of "leopard." These latter examples demonstrate code "C" which is related to revision or reconsideration of text by the writer.

In addition to categories "A," "B," "C", there is a code "D" for language that was highly related to the fact that writing was taking place, but not directly to the three parts of the writing process. Sam, for example, asked the researcher how many sheets

of paper she had used to observe him. He also commented on how tired his hand was from writing. Students at times requested clarification of their assignments, asked to borrow erasers, remarked on the length of what they had written, discussed another classmate's writing topic, asked classmates about their stories, or read to someone what they had written. All language of this type was tied to the fact that writing was taking place in the classroom, and was judged to belong to category "D" in the Kasten codes.

Of categories "A," "B," and "C" related to the writing process model (Figure 2), category "A" was consistently higher than category "B" or "C," reflecting a large portion of language related to a pre-writing or consideration function. Category "D" was also very high, reflecting the writing related language which was not directly tied to the three phases of the writing process.

In the fifth grade classroom, where journal writing as an on-going part of the curriculum, students had fewer utterances during journal writing than they did in writing that was assigned. Also in journal writing, utterances related to reconsideration, category "C," tended to be lower. It would appear as though the lack of audience, or limited audience, associated with journal writing was related to less need to revise a text. Category "B," language that accompanies text, such as subvocalization, is somewhat higher in journal writing than in the assigned writing.

Categories "A, "B," "C," "D" and "F" represented all the language that could somehow be considered "on-task" because it was language that was related either directly or indirectly to the fact that writing was taking place in the classroom. These combined categories constitute 98.9% of all utterances in the third grade; 94.4% of all utterances in the fifth grade, year 1; and 95% of utterances in the fifth grade, year 2. The overall average of this related language is 96.1%.

ORAL LANGUAGE IN THE WRITING PROCESS - KASTEN CODES

		Grades Yr. 1	Grades Yr 2	Grade 3	Average
A	Consideration	19.6%	27.6%	20.2%	22.5%
B	Text Production	37.0%	17.0%	15.0%	23.0%
C	Reconsideration	12.1%	22.3%	14.5%	16.3%
D	Other related talk	24.1%	27.1%	21.2%	24.1%
E	Unrelated talk	5.6%	5.0%	1.1%	3.9%
F	Undetermined function (but related to writing)	1.7%	1.0%	28.0%	10.2%
	"On Task" Language	94.4%	95.0%	98.9%	96.1%
	"Off Task" Language	5.6%	5.0%	1.1%	3.9%

(Kasten & Clarke, 1986)

Table 1

Results of Halliday Coding

This section views the data from the perspective of Halliday, whose work has made significant contributions to the study of oral language and its functions. In Table 1 Halliday's seven functions of oral language are listed across the top of the columns. In the rows, the percentage of usage of each particular function is listed.

HALLIDAY FUNCTIONS OF LANGUAGE DURING WRITING

	INT	INF	HRS	PER	IST	REG	IMG	UND
All 5th Grade	29.0	23.0	16.0	7.4	2.8	0.8	2.0	29.0
5th Grade Year 1	18.9	21.4	12.1	8.5	2.0	1.4	1.0	35.2
5th Grade Year 2	19.7	24.1	19.7	6.2	3.8	.03	3.4	23.1
3rd Grade	26.7	21.5	18.8	1.8	7.1	2.9	1.3	19.9

INT = INTERACTIONAL
INF = INFORMATIVE
HRS = HEURISTIC
IMG = IMAGINARY
PER = PERSONAL
IST = INSTRUMENTAL
REG = REGULATORY
UND = UNDETERMINED BY HALLIDAY CODES

(KASTEN & CLARKE, 1986)

Table 2

The functions of language which were present in the language used by the subjects during writing tended to be consistent among all subjects studied. Language that was informative (INF), heuristic (HRS), and interactional (INT), were consistently high

in each group studied and among subjects as a whole. The functions of language that Halliday described as personal (PER), instrumental (IST), imaginary (IMG), and regulatory (REG), occurred infrequently during writing. The very lowest of these categories was imaginative language which almost never happened in a writing situation.

These findings concur with a somewhat similar study done in Pennsylvania (Goldstone, 1983) in which a team of researchers addressed the functions of language used by young elementary age students in a variety of school settings. Their study also found few incidences of imaginative language, and had similar findings overall. The high incidence of language that did not fit the Halliday codes was listed in a last, "undetermined" (UND) column in Table 2. The types of utterances assigned this code include: (a) Subvocalization during writing, which received a code of "B" in the Kasten codes, and (b) reading aloud during writing. Both of these types of language deserve some special attention.

Reading Aloud and Subvocalizing: Special Issues

Reading aloud was sometimes judged as an "A" (consideration) in the Kasten codes if the reading resulted in preparing the writer for subsequent text, functioning as prewriting considering what to write. At other times it received a code of "C" if the reading aloud resulted in revision or reconsideration. Reading aloud was judged to belong to the category "D" when

neither consideration nor reconsideration was apparent, but the oral language was occurring because writing was taking place in the classroom.

It is also important to note that silent rereading took place during writing and appeared to serve a function similar to that of reading aloud or reading with subvocalizing. Silent rereading was noted on the MOF but was not studied in this particular analysis because only oral language utterances were analyzed. If anything audible accompanied rereading, then it was coded and analyzed as subvocalization.

Subvocalization is a common behavior during writing in elementary children, especially during revising. It is extensive in certain individual writers; it occurs only occasionally in others. Subvocalizing during writing does not fit a Halliday category in the estimation of the researchers because his studies of oral language did not include written language.

Subvocalization seems to fit Vygotsky's (1978) description of an intrapersonal function of language. This is language that we use ourselves, that assists us in the cognitive, problem solving roles of everyday life. Smith (1983) called this function of language the "unspeakable habit." This function is not unlike what many adults do when they choose to read aloud a difficult passage in a textbook or computer manual, or review aloud when studying for a difficult exam.

In addition to subvocalization, reading aloud is a similar maverick in this study. Students were observed reading stories aloud regularly and in different situations. Sometimes they read aloud to themselves; sometimes they read to share with classmates or their teachers; sometimes they read aloud over another student's shoulder to see what he or she was writing. The observers occasionally heard comments like "Can I hear your story?" or "Now you listen to mine."

Each time reading aloud occurred, the specific circumstances surrounding the reading event were examined. There were occurrences in which the language was judged to have Halliday's interactional (INT) function because sharing of the writing was deliberate and purposeful among two or more classmates. If the student writer appeared to use the reading aloud as a strategy to solve a writing problem, such as making a decision about revising or how to continue a story, then the occurrences were judged to be related to Halliday's heuristic (HRS) function of language. There were other occurrences of reading aloud in which no function was readily apparent, from the perspective of Halliday's codes. These incidences of reading aloud may also be judged as that intrapersonal function of language described by Vygotsky. However, as in the case with subvocalizing, it is perhaps logical that reading aloud would not always fit into Halliday's functions

since this is another unique circumstance where oral language and written language are used in concert.

Conclusions

Vygotsky (1978) described a way of looking at learning; he called it "The Zone of Proximal Development." He suggested that there is a zone between what a learner can do or can solve in isolation and what the learner is capable of doing in collaboration with peers and adults. The language observed during writing seemed to demonstrate the powerful learning strategy of collaboration. The language that accompanies writing not only is highly related to the writing process, but may in fact facilitate valuable learning opportunities. In the classrooms where sharing and talking during writing are encouraged, learning opportunities become more powerful and effective. In classrooms where sharing and talking during writing are forbidden, instruction is likely less effective and valuable learning is forfeited. Children need to be able to talk sometimes while they are writing in the classroom.

Rosenblatt (1978) suggested that the experience of reading is a transaction involving the reader, the physical text, and the intended or comprehended message. She suggested that in all circumstances, some kind of change takes place for the experiencing reader. Researchers are applying this principle to the writer as well (Goodman, 1984; Shanklin, 1982), as

understanding of the reading-writing connection continues to expand. Writers, like readers, continually grow and change as they become more proficient at making sense with written language.

It is easy to see, as we observe writers in elementary classrooms and listen to their language, that we are privy to a dynamic cognitive process. The writer is in a whole language environment in which reading, writing, listening, and speaking all contribute to the creation of a student's text.

Summary

In summary, the findings in this study lead to the conclusion that oral language plays an important role in the writing process. Specifically, oral language:

1. Accompanies writing as an intrapersonal function.
2. Helps writers with reconsidering or revising their text.
3. Helps writers make decisions about considering what to write.
4. Is highly related to writing and almost entirely "on-task."
5. Provides opportunities for collaboration to enhance learning opportunities.
6. Assists student writers in talking about and increasing their understanding of the writing process.

It is important for teachers to understand WHY children may be talking during writing. Writing may be more of a group process

- or at least an interactional and transactional one - than we have previously thought. If one of the main purposes of writing is to share one's thoughts with others, perhaps having an "other" close at hand with whom one can purposefully interact can be considered part of the creative process of writing. This interaction provides opportunities to test ideas and sound out the appropriateness of particular words or phrases. This talk is hardly off-task behavior! We call this a "community of writers" (Goodman, 1984).

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